

Contact: Brian Gorman
(206) 526-6613

NOAA03-R132
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 29, 2003

**NOAA FISHERIES PROPOSES NOTICE TO REDUCE FISHING CAPACITY IN THE
PACIFIC COAST GROUND FISH TRAWL FISHERY**

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) today published a notice to reduce fishing capacity in the Pacific Coast groundfish trawl industry. The agency is seeking public comment during the next 30 days on the notice. NOAA (the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) is an agency of the Commerce Department.

The omnibus FY 2003 spending bill authorized NOAA Fisheries to reduce the number of commercial trawlers catching groundfish (excluding whiting caught by at-sea processors).

The program's goal is straightforward: to get the biggest sustained reduction in fishing capacity at the least cost by paying certain trawl permit holders and vessel owners to relinquish their fishing privileges. Although the program targets groundfish, participants will also give up their fishing permits for Dungeness crab and pink shrimp.

"This program will give a financial incentive to fishermen to withdraw from the commercial trawl industry, allowing the fishery itself to recover and remain profitable for those who continue to fish," said William Hogarth, head of NOAA Fisheries.

The \$46 million capacity-reduction program will be paid for by a \$10 million appropriation and a \$36 million loan to the fishing industry.

The program will invite bids from owners of groundfish trawl permits. The bids will be ranked, based in part on the value of each bidder's past harvests, and the fishermen will hold a referendum on repayment of the loan. If the referendum is approved, fishermen with successful bids will be paid to surrender their federal groundfish permits, any other federal fishing licenses associated with the fishing vessel, and give up their California, Oregon or Washington fishing licenses for Dungeness crab and pink shrimp. Fishermen will be able to keep their vessels, but they can never be used as fishing boats again.

The loan of up to \$36 million dollars will pay for almost 80 percent of the cost of the capacity-reduction program. Fishermen who remain in these fisheries will repay the loan through an assessment on the dockside value of their fish over the next 30 years.

NOAA Fisheries is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources through scientific research, management, enforcement, and the conservation of marine mammals and other protected marine species and their habitat.

The Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources.

The notice can be found on the Internet at: <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/>

Comments on these proposed regulations should be addressed to: Michael L. Grable, Chief, Financial Services Division, National Marine Fisheries Service, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910-3282.

On the Internet:

NOAA - <http://www.noaa.gov>

NOAA Fisheries - <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>